



Flood Cell 7 – River AI (Creggan)

# Athlone Flood Alleviation Scheme



### Legend

Flood Cell 7



Westmeath County Council

Project  
Athlone Flood Alleviation Scheme

Title  
Location of Flood Cell 7

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### Issue Details

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# Hundreds of students left homeless by flash flooding



Brian McDonald in Athlone

November 12 2002 0:11 AM



HUNDREDS of people living in Athlone, most of them students, spent a second night in temporary accommodation after a flash flood swamped their homes. Large numbers of students slept in a makeshift dormitory at a hall in Athlone Institute of Technology on emergency bedding provided by the Army, while local hotels threw open their doors to others.

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Large numbers of students slept in a makeshift dormitory at a hall in Athlone Institute of Technology on emergency bedding provided by the Army, while local hotels threw open their doors to others.

Damage estimated at up to ?m was caused by the flooding on the eastern edge of Athlone, in the heart of the area accommodating much of Athlone IT's student population.

Torrential rainfall, estimated by the Meteorological Service at double the average for the month, swelled the Al River, a tributary of the Shannon, and the water spilled into the Willow Park estate. Residents and students living in Willow Park, directly opposite Athlone IT, were caught unawares by the deluge, which swept into their homes on Sunday.

Athlone Town Council and Westmeath Co Council staff, aided by the Army and civil defence teams, rushed to the estate and distributed 3,000 sandbags in an attempt to keep back the rising waters.

People living in Alverno Drive, most of them students, were hardest hit and most were unable to escape through their front door. While some initially moved to upstairs rooms, they were advised to leave the houses for safety reasons.

Emma Lynch from Cavan, who graduated in tourism last Thursday from Athlone IT, escaped from her flat by fleeing through her kitchen door and seeking refuge with friends in the house next door. But from there she and the others had to get out a window to avoid the rising waters.

"Everything here is ruined. It's just terrible. We never expected anything like this," she said.

The president of Athlone IT Students' Union, Ian Harnett, and vice-president Carolyn Ward yesterday visited students who had returned to flats and rented houses to salvage what they could of their belongings.

He appealed to the Government to immediately provide emergency aid to help students find alternative accommodation.

He believed 500-600 students could be homeless as a result of the flooding.

"It is a very serious situation for people who just want to get on with their studies and it requires special attention by the Government.

"Some students have lost literally everything including clothes, books, computers, laptops and other belongings," he said.

He also said thieves had swooped on a number of houses in the immediate aftermath of the flooding and stolen a range of items after the occupants had been rescued by the emergency services.

"That was despicable and just heaps insult on top of injury for people who are already worried about how they are going to get through this," Mr Harnett said.

Last evening a spokesman for Westmeath Co Council explained that the flooding had been caused by the pressure arising from unprecedented rainfall, which caused the River Al to burst past a culvert and a restraining dam under the N6 road into Athlone.

# Flooding affects homes in Athlone

Updated / Monday, 11 Nov 2002 22:05



A number of families in Athlone were forced to spend the night in temporary accommodation after flooding forced them from their homes. Residents in the Willow Park area of the town were affected. The flooding happened when a dam on a small river burst yesterday evening.

More than 200 students spent the night in temporary accommodation after flooding caused the evacuation of houses beside the town's Institute of Technology. Many of the students slept at a student union centre and others were taken to local hotels.

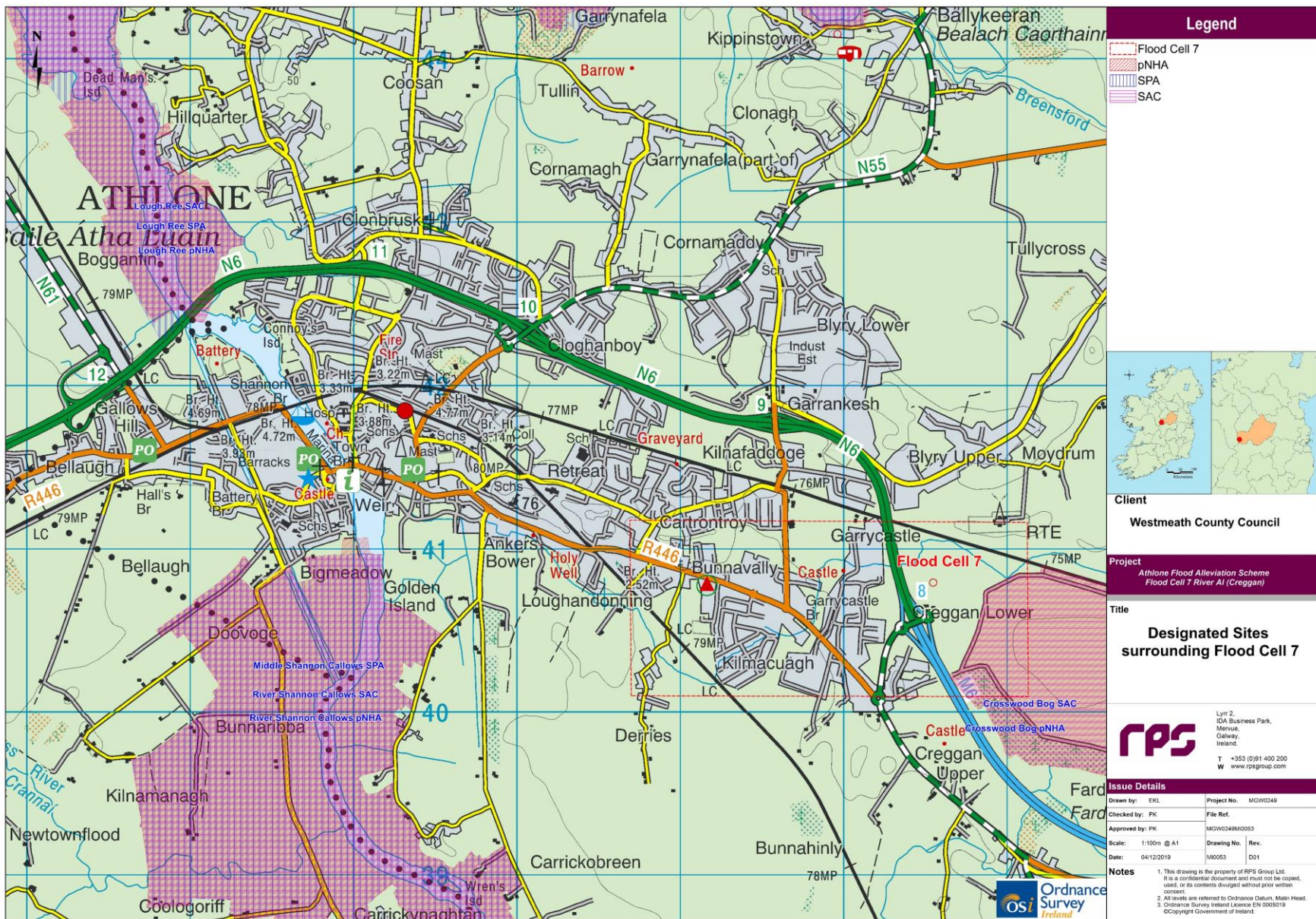
Athlone Institute of Technology says that as many as 400 students are homeless and damage worth tens of thousands of euro has been caused as a result of the flooding.

The IT's Chaplain, Fr Shay Casey, says the situation is 'a major disaster' and many students have had all their property destroyed including school notes and study material. He has appealed to the Government to make funding available immediately to help those in distress.

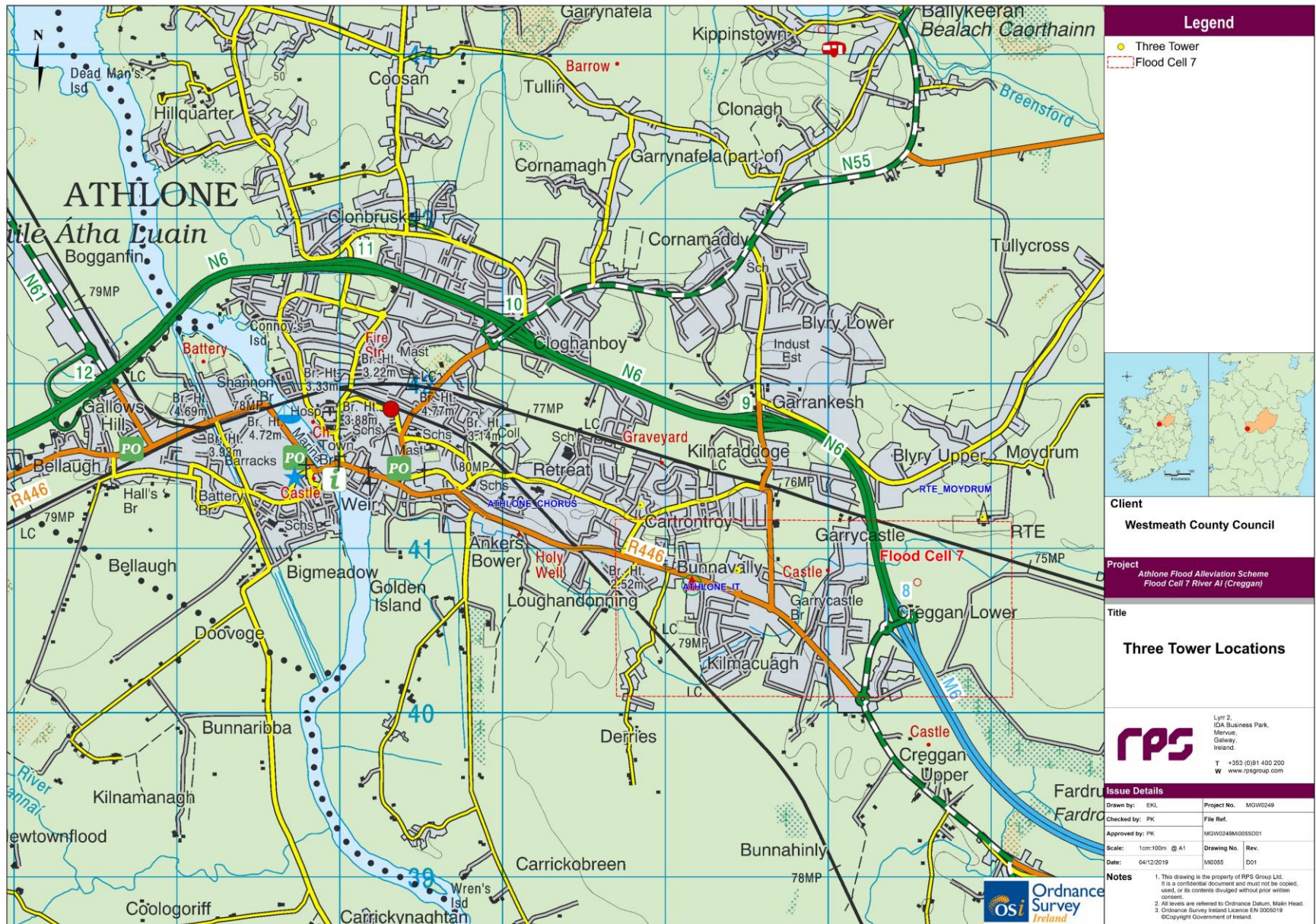


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